



The Island Eagle

The Official Newsletter of the American Citizen Services Unit, U.S. Embassy Nassau

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SOCIAL SECURITY AND LIVING ABROAD

Whether you are getting social security checks now, or are about to become eligible for social security in the near future, you should know that we are here to help you. For those currently getting social security checks, there are certain steps you must take each year to ensure you continue to receive them. If you want to start collecting your social security benefits, you need to act as early as possible, as the start-up process can be slow.

If you are currently receiving your social security checks, make sure you complete and return Form 7161 to the Social Security Administration (SSA) every year. The SSA instituted this procedure as an important fraud-prevention tool for overseas beneficiaries. If you do not return this form every year, you may stop receiving your checks. Once you stop receiving your checks, it can be difficult and time-consuming to get them going again. You should

also notify the SSA immediately if you change your address, as this can also affect your payments. If you stop receiving your checks for any reason, call us at the Embassy right away to help you.

If you are eligible to start receiving benefits, you can either contact the SSA directly, or bring to the Embassy your Social Security card, a copy of your birth certificate and, if your name changed due to marriage, a

marriage certificate. We will forward this to the SSA, who will send you the forms you need to get started. It is important to keep in mind that Embassy Nassau is not a claims-taking post and all cases for The Bahamas are sent to another office, so the process can be slow and you should start early.

For more information, and to get all the necessary forms, go to www.ssa.gov.

APPLYING FOR A PASSPORT IN THE BAHAMAS

I know we aren't even into summer yet, but 2006 is coming faster than you may realize, and along with it the proposed deadline for having passports to return to the United States. So if you don't have a passport, or if your passport is about to expire, come down to the Embassy between 1-4 pm Mon-Thur, or between 10 am and noon on Friday, and we will help take care of you. Right now, you can get your passport between 5 and 10 business days, but this could change quickly if there is an end-of-the-year rush.

For faster service, make sure you have everything you need before coming. Procedures and fees vary depending on whether the passport is a renewal, a first-time passport, or a child's passport. For all fees, we accept either Bahamian or American money, but each fee must be paid in the same currency.

For more details, please visit our website, travel.state.gov. If you still have questions,

or believe you are not able to meet the documentation requirements, contact us at the Embassy (see *Important Information*, below).

Passport Renewal

You can apply for a renewal passport if your current passport is not damaged, was received within the past 15 years, was issued when you were at least age 16, and if you still have the same name as in passport (or you can legally document your name change). For the renewal, you need a completed form DS-82, available at travel.state.gov, two passport photos, your previous passport and the \$67 fee. If your name has changed, you will also need to provide the legal proof, such as a marriage certificate. This is the only application that does not require a personal appearance, so if you can't come down, you can FedEx us all the documentation at US Embassy, PO Box N8197, Nassau, Bahamas, attn: ACS Unit. Also include a pre-paid return FedEx label so we can send you your passport when it arrives.

First-Time Passport

If you have never had a passport before, or do not meet the criteria for a passport renewal, you must appear in person at the Embassy to get a passport. You will need to bring a completed DS-11, available at travel.state.gov, two passport photos, proof of citizenship (such as a previous passport or a birth certificate), government-issued proof of identification, and the \$97 fee. Please do **not** sign the DS-11 until you are told to do so at the Embassy.

Children's Passports

The procedures for children are generally the same as those for first-time passport holders. However, for children under 14, the child and **both** parents must be present. If this is not possible, please contact us for more guidance. If the child is also eligible for a Bahamian passport, things will be much easier if you get the Bahamian passport before coming down. The fee for children under 16 is \$82.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Hours for Non-Emergency Services:
Mon. to Thurs. from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm
Fri. from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

To contact us and for general info:
Call **242-322-1181**. Follow the voice prompts for either general information or to speak with a member of the consular section. For after-hours emergencies, you can call **242-328-2206**.

E-Mail:
ACSN@state.gov

On the Web:
Embassy: nassau.usembassy.gov
Department of State: travel.state.gov



PHOTO OF THE MONTH


During a trip to Eleuthera, Ambassador Rood visited Governor's Harbour Primary School, where he met the children and read to classes. During his tenure here, the Ambassador has placed special emphasis on encouraging youth literacy.

TOP TEN TIPS FOR TRAVELING ABROAD

1. Make sure you have a signed, valid passport and visas, if required. Also, before you go, fill in the emergency information page of your passport! Use pencil-- this information may change over the ten years you have a passport.
2. Read the Consular Information Sheets (and Public Announcements or Travel Warnings, if applicable) for the countries you plan to visit.
3. Familiarize yourself with local laws and customs of the countries to which you are traveling. Remember, the U.S. Constitution does not follow you! While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws.
4. Make 2 copies of your passport identification page. This will facilitate replacement if your passport is lost or stolen. Leave one copy at home with friends or relatives. Carry the other with you in a separate place from your passport.
5. Give your itinerary to family or friends at home so that you can be contacted in case of an emergency.
6. Do not leave your luggage unattended in public areas. Do not accept packages from strangers.
7. Prior to your departure, you should register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate through travel.state.gov. Registration will make your presence and whereabouts known in case it is necessary to contact you in an emergency. **In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare and whereabouts may not be released without your express authorization. Remember to leave a detailed itinerary and the numbers or copies of your passport or other citizenship documents with a friend or relative in the United States.**
8. To avoid being a target of crime, try not to wear conspicuous clothing and expensive jewelry and do not carry excessive amounts of money or unnecessary credit cards.
9. In order to avoid violating local laws, deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money or purchase art or antiques.
10. **If you get into trouble of any kind, contact the nearest U.S. embassy!**

MAY

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 American Holiday (Embassy Closed)

JUNE

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 Bahamian Holiday (Embassy Closed)

Know an American in The Bahamas or Turks and Caicos not getting the newsletter? Tell them to e-mail us at ACSN@state.gov with their name and address. We also recommend that all Americans overseas register at travel.state.gov in case of emergency.